

United States v. Crawford Goldsby, alias Cherokee Bill

To provide background information to the audience, the following was excerpted from the Fort Smith Elevator of August 2, 1895. Spectators at the original trial of Cherokee Bill would have been aware of these case details by reading the newspaper. However, please remember that the accused is innocent until proven guilty, regardless of press coverage.

"Lawrence Keating, a guard at the federal jail [in Fort Smith] was killed...[on July 25, 1895] by Cherokee Bill....

When the tragedy occurred...Keating had just gone on duty and Campbell Eoff, the turnkey, was locking the cells. The jail is composed of three tiers of cells....The usual manner of fastening the cells is by means of a lever so constructed as to be operated from the corridor at the end of the tier of cells. After the lever is thrown on, the turnkey enters the steel grating and locks each cell. The guard moves around with him on the outside of the grating to quiet any disturbance that may arise. The lever had been thrown. For some reason, however, it did not work. Eoff had locked all the cells on the east side of the jail and had passed around to the west side, in which is situated the cell occupied by Cherokee Bill. There he locked two doors. In attempting to fasten the door of the cell occupied by Dennis Davis...he found that the lock would not work. He stood at this for a moment, attempting to clear the lock, when suddenly Cherokee Bill stepped from his cell and leveling his weapon at Keating shouted, "Throw up your hands and give up that gun." Larry reached for his pistol and as he did so the outlaw fired, the bullet striking on the right side and passing entirely through the victim's body. He ran around the corner and fell, dying in a few moments...."